



CHARTING A NEW **TOMORROW** **PUBLIC DRAFT**

MONTANA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION STRATEGIC PLAN

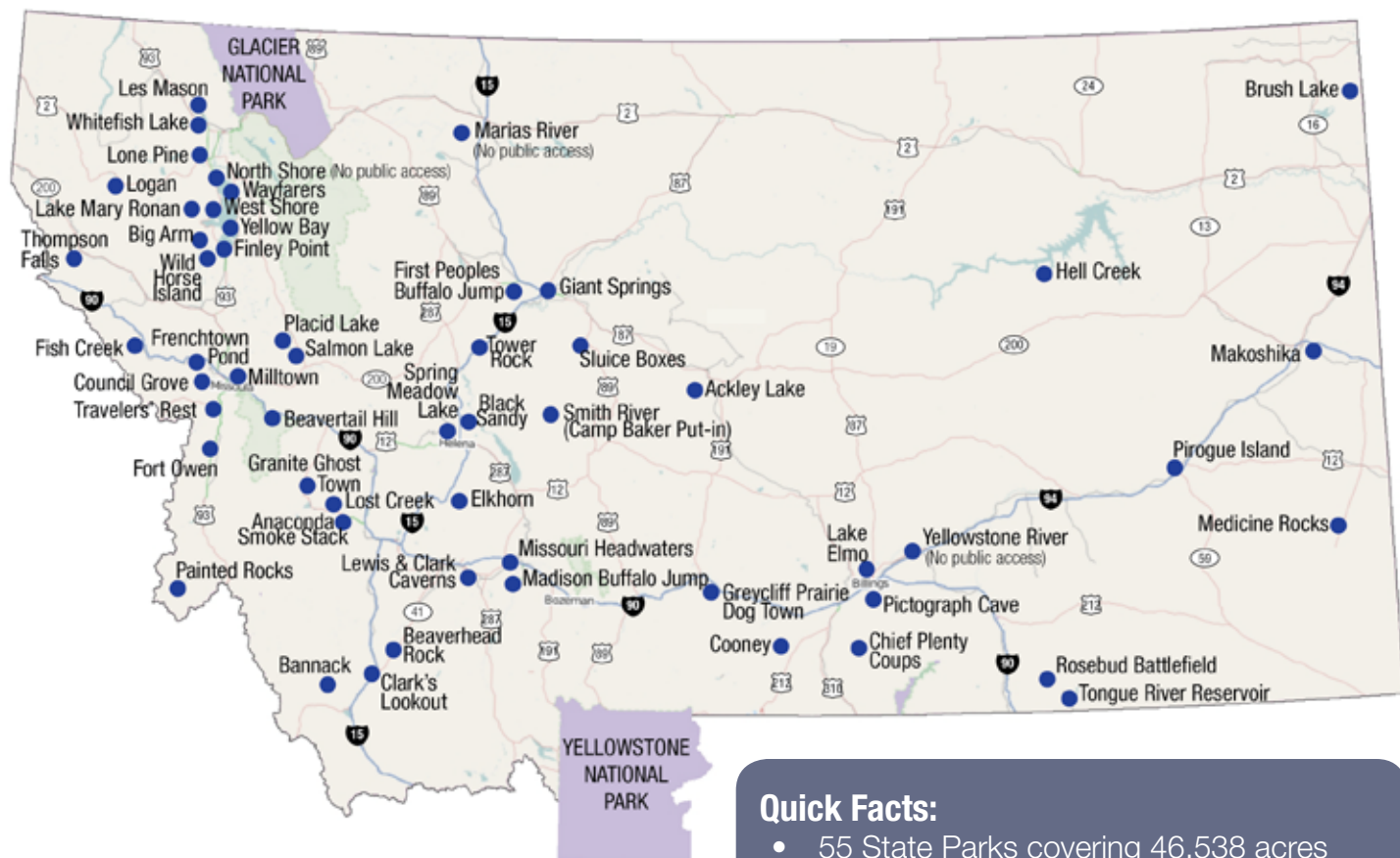
2015-2020



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WELCOME TO MONTANA STATE PARKS



Quick Facts:

- 55 State Parks covering 46,538 acres
- 7 National Historic Landmarks
- 4 Recreation Grant Programs
- First State Park: Lewis & Clark Caverns
- Over 2 million visits annually
- \$289 million in visitor spending each year

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of the Montana State Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan for 2020 was made possible through the input and support of members of the public and Montana Legislature, key stakeholders and supporters, Montana State Parks & Recreation Board, and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks staff.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	6
Internal and External Engagement	10
Brand Promise	12
Influencing Issues and Trends	13
Strategic Framework	18
Goals, Targets and Actions	19
A. Resources and Approaches	21
B. Fiscal Sustainability.....	23
C. Services & Experiences.....	24
D. Partnerships and Engagement.....	25
E. Awareness and Outreach.....	27
Conclusion	29
Appendices	30
A. References.....	30
B. Montana State Parks & Recreation Board.....	31



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Montana State Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan, *Charting a New Tomorrow*, establishes a shared direction for Montana's state parks and recreation programs through 2020. The plan focuses on progressive solutions to enhance and mature the park system. With guidance from the Montana State Parks & Recreation Board, the strategic plan ensures that Montanans, our visitors, and staff all have a common understanding of where we are headed as our roadmap for the future.

Montana State Parks provides diverse recreational opportunities with family-friendly, affordable, and enriching programming and experiences. The Division also supports community recreation through its four grant programs. With over 2 million visits each year, state parks help connect families, communities, and out-of-state visitors to Montana's unique natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

Looking forward to the next five years, the Division is at an important crossroads. Numerous studies conducted over the last 25 years have demonstrated that Montana State Parks is challenged to maintain resources and provide consistent experiences across the state. The system lacks adequate levels of funding and staffing, as well as the necessary capital investment to protect resources and park infrastructure. A lack of public understanding and awareness has also been a key issue that has hindered the system since its establishment.

The Parks Board has directed the Division to develop an updated strategy that will address these longstanding resource challenges. This strategic plan presents a new direction for public consideration that proposes effective solutions given available resources. Historically, there

has been a disconnect between what the public desires and the level of funding for recreation; this plan ultimately seeks to close this gap.

Key to the success of this strategy is the ability of Montana State Parks to effectively brand itself.

The strategic plan outlines **our brand promise** to our visitors and communicates the personality and values that distinguish Montana's state parks with significant, relevant, and accessible experiences. By aligning each park with the brand promise, we can unite efforts to enhance the system with a more cohesive voice and consistent experiences, and further heighten public awareness to help Montana State Parks achieve fiscal sustainability. In order to do this, we must develop diversified funding, grow and expand strategic partnerships, and build an engaged consistency.

SIGNIFICANT ◀

Montana State Parks manages **significant** sites, representing the statewide scenic, historic, cultural, scientific, and recreational legacy of Montana's heritage.

RELEVANT

Montana State Parks provides **relevant** programs and experiences that create lasting memories for Montana families and visitors and support our tourism economy.

ACCESSIBLE

Montana State Parks are **accessible** for all regardless of wealth, physical ability, or location in the state.

Developing a plan that is both responsive to public needs and addresses the long-standing challenges of the system required comprehensive internal and external outreach. These included: community listening sessions, stakeholder interviews, evaluation of statewide outdoor recreation trend data and public use research, and feedback from staff, the Parks Board, and members of the Legislature through surveys and meetings.

Presented is an ambitious strategy that will take strategic focus to accomplish over the next five years. But it is one that must happen to effectively enhance the system. In order to manage parks and programs in a manner that is consistent with resources and aligns with the brand promise, the Division proposes to prioritize and reallocate resources to preserve the most significant sites in the system. Classifying sites will help the Division provide a higher level of staffing, operational, and funding levels at the

most significant sites. This will not be easy, and may challenge some beliefs. The Division will work closely with the Parks Board to engage Montanans in a transparent and open process.

Each of the Division's programs must contribute to the implementation of the plan and recommendations for it to be successful. In addition, Montana State Parks will work with key partners, communities and engaged citizens to accomplish the targets set forth in this plan. If we are to effectively address the longstanding challenges of the Montana State Park system, we must bring forth new approaches and new ways to support families, communities, and economies around the state. Following the direction established in this plan, Montana State Parks commits to providing great services in a safe environment by managing significant, relevant, and accessible parks and programs.

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|----------------|---|
| GOAL A: | Manage significant, relevant, and accessible parks and programs in a manner that is consistent with available resources. |
| GOAL B: | Develop diversified and sustainable funding for the Montana State Parks system and statewide recreation programs. |
| GOAL C: | Provide for enriching recreation experiences for all visitors consistent with the brand promise. |
| GOAL D: | Foster strategic partnerships and an engaged constituency with visitors and key stakeholders that have a shared interest in the success of the Montana State Park system. |
| GOAL E: | Heighten awareness and recognition for the Montana State Parks brand through consistent engagement. |



CHARTING A NEW TOMORROW

Montana State Parks, a Division of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), began in 1939 with the creation of the Montana State Parks Commission. Today, Montana State Parks includes 55 parks totaling over 46,000 acres, and provides statewide leadership in a variety of outdoor recreation programs, including the Recreational Trails Program, Land and Water Conservation Fund program, and other recreation grant programs to support off-highway vehicle and snowmobile opportunities on public lands.

The statutory purpose for Montana State Parks is described specifically in MCA 23-1-101:

“For the purposes of conserving the scenic, historic, archaeological, scientific, and recreational resources of the state, providing for their use and enjoyment, and contributing to the cultural, recreational, and economic life of the people and their health...”

Under the guidance of the Montana State Parks & Recreation Board, the Division has developed the following Strategic Plan to move the state parks and recreation programs forward over the next five years. This plan does not address each and every program or focus of the park system. It strategically focuses on key issues and challenges the Division faces while also allowing for growth and opportunities that may arise subsequent to the plan.

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS

In 2014, Montana State Parks proudly celebrated its 75th anniversary as a state park system providing a diversity of natural, cultural and recreational resources. The Division works to preserve and protect Montana’s cultural,

FWP Mission

Through its employees and citizen Commission, provide for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources of Montana while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations.

Division Mission

Preserve and protect our state’s cultural, natural and recreational heritage for the benefit of our families, communities, and local economies.

natural and recreational heritage for the benefit of our families, communities, and local economies. Our goals are to provide excellent land stewardship, public safety and service through recreation, innovation and education; to provide an extraordinary experience for our visitors; and to keep our state parks system strong now and for generations to come.

With over 2 million visits each year, our parks, trails and recreation grant programs help connect visitors to our state’s unique resources. Ninety-nine percent of Montanans say it is important for Montana to have state parks,¹ and 95% say that outdoor recreation is important to the high quality of life they experience living here.² Preserving this legacy helps ensure our outdoor heritage continues for current and future generations.

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Outdoor recreation is a growing industry in Montana with significant contributions to local and state economies. Over 11 million visitors come to Montana annually to enjoy our state’s breathtaking landscapes,

1. Oschell, C. PhD and N. Nickerson PhD. 2012. Montana State Parks: Visitor Profile and Media Awareness. Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR). The University of Montana.
2. Montana State Parks. 2013. Creating a Vibrant Future for Montana’s Outdoor Recreation Heritage. Montana 2014-2018 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

"[Montana State Parks provide] opportunities for families to engage with one another outside—outside the house, outside the WiFi network, outside their routine lives. [We are] taking care of Montana's past, present and future."

-Missoula listening session



charming communities, and diverse recreation opportunities. The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) at the University of Montana reported that in 2013, nonresident visitors spent an estimated \$3.5 billion on travel-related expenditures—a 13% increase over 2012 estimates.³

State parks are a vital component of Montana's recreation economy. According to a 2010 economic impact survey conducted by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana, residents and non-resident visitors to Montana State Parks spend over \$289 million annually on gear, lodging, retail, gasoline and more.⁴ In addition, non-resident park visitors generate over \$126 million in industry sales and help sustain more than 1,600 tourism jobs in local communities each year.

The Outdoor Industry Association, the leading trade association and voice of the outdoor recreation industry, estimates that recreation is a \$5.8 billion industry statewide.⁵ Over \$403

million from recreation spending goes back into our economy as state and local tax revenue that supports cities and counties. The outdoor recreation industry is a vitally important sector in Montana and employs 14% of the total Montana workforce.⁶

OUR CHALLENGES

Montana State Parks provides important economic, recreational, and social benefits to the state and its citizens. However, over the course of its 75 years, the Division has and continues to face a number of fiscal and resource challenges related to funding and staffing levels, the size of the state park system, resource protection, and public awareness of Montana's state parks and recreation programs.

The Montana Legislature and Division have engaged in a number of planning efforts over the past 25 years to assess and understand the longstanding challenges of the park system. Through these efforts, the park system has taken steps to improve the uniformity of the system and expand its services and program offerings where feasible. However, over time these longstanding challenges have made it difficult for the Division and staff to maintain a consistent high-quality visitor experience. Additionally, the Montana State Park system is currently stressed with a growing backlog of deferred capital maintenance needs and declining infrastructure. These previous reports have ultimately fallen short in producing the big changes necessary to enhance the parks system.

Four key reports produced over the last 25 years include: State Park Futures Committee I (1990), 2020 Vision Strategic Plan (1998), State Park Futures Committee II (2002), and HJR 32 Study of State Parks, Outdoor Recreation and Heritage Programs (2012). See Timeline for more detail.

Visitors to Montana State Parks contribute

\$289 million
in total spending

Visitors to Montana State Parks sustain

1,600 jobs
annually

3. Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research. 2014. 2013 Montana Nonresident Traveler Expenditures & Economic Contribution. The University of Montana, Missoula, MT.

4. Bureau of Business and Economic Research. 2010. 2010 Economic Impact Survey of Visitors to Montana State Parks. The University of Montana, Missoula, MT.

5. Outdoor Industry Association. 2013. Montana State Outdoor Recreation Economy Report. Accessed at <http://outdoorindustry.org>.

6. Montana State Parks. 2013.



MONTANA STATE PARKS & RECREATION BOARD

In 2013, the Montana State Parks & Recreation Board (Parks Board or Board) was established to set policies and provide direction for the Division on management and coordination of our state parks and the four recreation grant programs that support recreation on public lands in Montana.

The citizen-led Board is appointed by the Governor and consists of five members representing different districts around the state. The Board oversees policy and rulemaking for the Division, approval of acquisitions and land transfers. They also work with local, state, and federal agencies to evaluate, coordinate, and promote recreational opportunities statewide. In addition to rulemaking, a key focus of the Board is to address the challenges that have encumbered the system for the past 75 years, and to provide guidance for the future of the Montana State Park system.

"It is fully appropriate to create a separate governing body to oversee state parks and other recreational programs administered by the Parks Division, [...] in order to provide a dedicated forum for and greater discussion of parks and recreation policies, issues, and access."

-HJR 32 Report

BUILDING SOLUTIONS

The Montana State Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan outlines the challenges of the park system related to resources and size, capacity, and fiscal sustainability among other issues. With the guidance of the Board and in conversation with Montanans, we must strategically assess

key questions like **how many state parks there should be**, **what characterizes a state park**, and **how should resources across the system be prioritized** to address fiscal challenges and capital maintenance backlog while maintaining affordability for all Montanans. Montana State Parks provides diverse recreation experiences, but we cannot be all things to all people. We must prioritize based on limited resources.

To address the long-standing fiscal and resource challenges, the Board has outlined the following strategic framework for the Division. It must be noted that while the Division is limited in its approach to address the staffing shortfall—the plan itself cannot guarantee more staff—the focus of this strategic plan is to produce effective solutions with the resources that are available.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Develop a diversified and sustainable funding model
- ▶ Build new strategic partners and nurture existing ones
- ▶ Foster an active and engaged constituent base

With our partners and the citizens of Montana, the Division will employ a holistic, systems thinking approach to align our programs and management strategies at all levels. The challenges faced are connected to a larger system of challenges for parks and recreation in the state. A strong Montana State Park system will enhance recreation at all levels and encourage investment that goes beyond the state parks' boundaries.

MONTANA STATE PARKS

TIMELINE: 1939 TO 2014

1939

FIRST STATE PARK

Montana State Parks and Commission established with Lewis and Clark Cavern State Park.



1953

COMMISSION ABOLISHED

Montana State Parks Commission abolished and lands transferred to Montana Highway Commission.



1965

MONTANA FISH & GAME

Transferred to Montana Fish & Game, which was renamed Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in 1979.



1990

FUTURES COMMITTEE I

In 1990, a Committee was appointed by the Governor to analyze the system and develop recommendations to improve it. The Committee found that the state park system was under-developed and at risk, and would continue to deteriorate without additional investment and attention. Detailed recommendations were made to address planning and management needs, enhance the image and marketing of the system, develop new partnerships with tourism and organizations, and investment of funds for capital improvements, operations, and equipment needs.

2002

FUTURES COMMITTEE II

In 2002, a second Committee was appointed to analyze the park system. Many of the same challenges identified in the 1990 report continued to hinder the system—notably inadequate staffing and funding levels to sustain the parks system. The report ultimately found that the Division was unable to maximize the visitor experience due to degraded infrastructure and resources and continued to struggle with its image and program awareness. In addition, the report found that there is continued poor public perception and understanding of the state park system.

2012

HJR 32 REPORT

The Environmental Quality Council prepared a 2012 report for the Legislature to analyze the state park system for the fourth time in 25 years and develop solutions. Through a comparative analysis with neighboring state park systems, the report found that Montana State Parks is one of the largest systems in the Rocky Mountain West, but has a smaller operating budget and lower staffing levels. Ultimately, the report recommended the creation of a Montana State Parks & Recreation Board to address these challenges through public dialogue and consistent attention.



2013

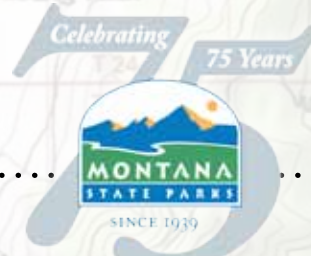
MONTANA STATE PARKS & RECREATION BOARD

Montana State Parks & Recreation Board established by Legislature with overwhelming support.

2014

75TH ANNIVERSARY

Montana State Parks celebrates its 75th Anniversary.



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INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

In December 2013, the Parks Board requested the Department engage the citizens of Montana through the development of an updated strategic plan. The plan will serve to guide the state park system and recreation programs. Key assessments in the planning process include:

- ✧ Clarifying mandates, mission and core values;
- ✧ Assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the park system and program;
- ✧ Addressing the capacity to improve funding, advocacy, and resources;
- ✧ Gathering informed input from staff, elected officials, key stakeholders and organizations;
- ✧ Engaging the public in a meaningful discussion about the future of the state park system.

A brief summary of the internal and external forums follows. Updates and additional discussions were held at the Parks Board meetings throughout 2014. Documents are provided on the Montana State Parks website.

10

Staff Survey

Montana State Parks' full-time and long-term seasonal staff were asked to respond to an online survey to gauge their perceptions on issues and topics related to the strategic plan update; identify key priorities within the Division; understand the outlook for the future; ascertain important internal considerations such as staff resources and confidence; and provide suggestions for improving the Division and programs.

Top three Division-wide needs:

1. Adequate funding and staffing resources
2. Enhance visitor experiences
3. Improve resource conditions

Legislative Survey

An online survey was sent to 149 members of the Legislature to understand the perceptions of elected officials and the political context and awareness of the Montana State Park system. Thirty-five surveys were completed, giving a 23% response rate.

Top three priorities:

1. Address backlog of capital and maintenance needs
2. Sell, transfer or donate lands that do not meet the Montana State Parks' mission
3. Develop revenue streams

Important attributes of the state park system:
Affordable, Accessible, Clean and Well-Maintained

Board Retreat

The Montana State Parks & Recreation Board and senior leadership from the Division participated in a facilitated retreat to set goals for the Board to address in their first year. The Board discussed the role and purpose of the state park system, current challenges in funding and operations, and opportunities in policy, regulation and legislation to improve Montana State Parks and recreation programs.

Three key focus areas:

1. Diversified and sustainable funding
2. Existing and new strategic partnerships
3. Build engaged constituents

In April, Montana State Parks hosted 8 community listening sessions around the state, facilitated by the MSU Extension Local Government Center. Over 117 people attended the sessions and participated in discussion forums on the values, challenges, and opportunities for the future of Montana's state park and recreation programs. The meetings identified top strategies prioritized by participants that the Executive and Legislative branches should consider pursuing to sustain the system and increase public investment, and top strategies to enhance the system.

- ✧ Develop revenue streams
- ✧ Pursue public-private partnerships
- ✧ Address the backlog of capital maintenance needs
- ✧ Pursue state General Fund allocation
- ✧ Reduce the size of the State Parks system

- ✧ Build community partnerships
- ✧ Develop more recreation resources and services
- ✧ Expand range of opportunities
- ✧ Utilize focused marketing and social media
- ✧ Enhance universal access

[illegible]

WHAT IS OUR BRAND?

Outdoor recreation is an integral part of Montana's heritage. Montana's state parks have the role of telling the story of our unique natural, cultural, and recreational resources, and preserving this legacy for future generations to appreciate and enjoy. The system also provides significant economic benefits to local communities and the tourism industry. But since the beginning of the park system in 1939, the Division has had limited public awareness, understanding and recognition.

That is why a brand is important. It unites us. It communicates the essential attributes that distinguish Montana State Parks and the experiences our visitors can expect. It provides a strategic roadmap with a unified voice. And perhaps more so, a brand is a "promise to deliver" made between Montana State Parks and our customers—something that is consistent across the system and does not change from park to park or year to year.

Just like the Montana tourism brand reflects the public perception of the state to residents and visitors and provides a tool to promote Montana's assets, the Montana State Parks brand is our promise to our customers and partners.

Using the Montana tourism brand as a model, branding Montana State Parks will:

- ✧ Unite efforts to enhance Montana State Parks with a more cohesive voice.
- ✧ Help all Montanans and visitors understand and appreciate Montana State Parks, recreation programs and the outdoor heritage of this state.
- ✧ Enhance the outdoor recreation industry and support Montana's tourism economy.
- ✧ Give staff the basis they need to promote the state parks and recreation programs with this unified voice.
- ✧ Bolster parks and recreation across the state.

OUR BRAND PROMISE

Montana State Parks manages **significant** sites, representing the statewide scenic, historic, cultural, scientific, and recreational legacy of Montana's heritage.

Montana State Parks provides **relevant** programs and experiences that create lasting memories for Montana families and visitors and support our tourism economy.

Montana State Parks are **accessible** for all regardless of wealth, physical ability, or location in the state.

OUR VALUES

SERVICE

We are service oriented, and proud of our strong work ethic.

SAFETY

We are committed to integrated public safety and education.

STEWARDSHIP

We are dedicated stewards of our resources with well-maintained park facilities and amenities.

SUSTAINABILITY

We are fiscally responsible while preserving affordability for all.

"Critical to all recreation providers and public land managers are reliable funding sources. At the statewide level there is a need to foster strategic partnerships and develop sustainable revenue streams for parks and recreation."

- Montana Trails, Recreation and Park Association

INFLUENCING ISSUES AND TRENDS

DIVISION OUTLOOK

Montana State Parks and statewide recreation programs have seen tremendous change over the last decade. Visitation to state parks has increased over 40% since 2003, with a record of 2.112 million visits in 2013. Demand for services and programming is increasing, and visitors are looking for a variety of experiences and amenities like electrical hook-ups, WiFi and boating facilities.⁷ According to a special report on camping by the Outdoor Industry Association, 54 million Americans camped in a state park in 2011, up from 52 million in 2010.⁸ The report found that electricity is the most desired luxury product to have camping beyond the essentials.

Educational and stewardship activities are also growing. In 2013, over 26,000 Montana students participated in educational programs presented in state parks, which is an 18% increase over participation in 2012. Additionally, more than 1,200 volunteers provided over 38,000 hours of service in 2013.

In addition, Montana State Parks provides over \$2 million annually in grants for recreation on local, state, and federal lands. The Division manages four grant programs:

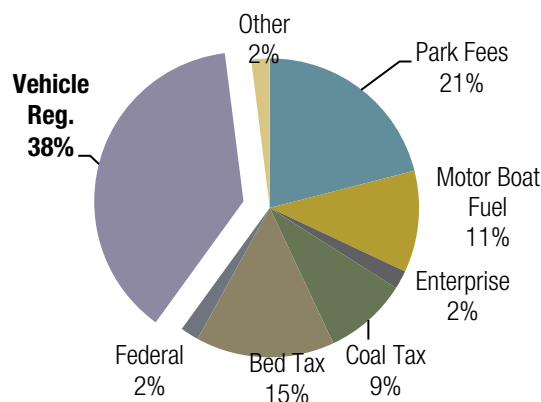
- ✧ Recreational Trails Program (RTP)
- ✧ Off-Highway Vehicle Program
- ✧ Snowmobile Program
- ✧ Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

Since 1965, the LWCF program in Montana has provided over \$38 million in grants for community recreation projects around the state. Yet in recent years, funding has decreased at

the federal level, and the current appropriation to Montana is 88% less than the peak levels reached in 1979.⁹ In 2013, Montana communities requested over \$3.9 million in RTP funds, however the program had only \$1.6 million in allocations from Congress, leaving an unmet need of \$2.3 million in grant requests. As available funding for recreation decreases at the federal level, the Division sees a higher demand for state funding to support recreation at the city and county level.

While visitation and demand have been increasing, revenues are inadequate as expenditures and cost of operations continue to grow. Montana State Parks receives no funding from hunting or fishing licenses or the state General Fund for day-to-day operations and management. The light vehicle registration fee for state parks comprises 38% of the total operating budget as of fiscal year 2013. The increase in the light vehicle registration fee from \$4 to \$6 in 2011 has helped boost the Division fund balance with a consistent 77% participation rate, but this varies across the state.

**Montana State Parks Funding,
Fiscal Year 2013**



7. Montana State Parks. 2014. Community Listening Sessions Summary Executive Summary. June 2014.

8. Outdoor Industry Association. 2012. Special Report on Camping. <http://www.outdoorindustry.org>.

9. Montana State Parks. 2013.

Approximately 21% of funding is generated from park user fees—some of which are the lowest in the Rocky Mountain West—and another 15% comes from the lodging facility use tax that the Division shares with the Montana Office of Tourism.

In considering the Division outlook for the next five years, a majority of staff feel the outlook is generally positive, according to the strategic plan staff survey. But many felt there are key challenges that need to be addressed, including: the sustainability of funding and staffing resources; services and amenities to enhance the visitor experience; adequate workplace resources and training; improvement of resource conditions; and addressing the maintenance backlog. In addition to addressing fiscal challenges, staff feel strongly that maintaining affordability for all should also be a key focus.

ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

Montana State Parks has taken great strides in effectively telling our story and raising awareness of the system. According to a 2012 survey on media awareness, close to half of the Montana population recalls seeing or hearing media regarding Montana State Parks, and 99.6% say it is important to have state parks.¹⁰

Additionally, staff has worked hard over the years to cultivate volunteerism, engage communities, enhance educational opportunities, and promote participation in special events like National Public Lands Day, National Trails Day, and First Day Hikes. Established in 2011, the Montana State Parks AmeriCorps Program has also been vital in expanding the understanding of the park system through community service.

There is continued opportunity for growth and awareness to help visitors become advocates of the system. A lack of public understanding and awareness has hindered system since its establishment. The HJR 32 report found that all of Montana's state parks and outdoor recreational and heritage resources deserve more support, and called for greater commitment and attention by the Legislature and the people of Montana to support these valued resources.¹¹

In the community listening sessions held as part of the strategic planning process, stakeholders felt strongly that more action and partnership is needed to develop a stronger support base.¹² Participants identified city and county engagement and community leadership as weak focus areas within the system.

In particular, engagement with local park departments, county commissioners and elected officials; participation in hosting and supporting community events; community outreach; and connections with schools, museums, cultural institutions, arts councils, and user groups. Stakeholders identified partnerships with friends groups and volunteers, deeper community involvement, and consistent communication between the Division and Montanans as ways to connect with users. A deeper sense of interdependency and partnership between Montana State Parks and supporters is needed to sustain the system into the future.

FISCAL AND RESOURCE CHALLENGES

The Montana State Parks system is at an important crossroads. Visitation and demand for services is increasing, yet over the years resources have remained stagnant. Studies have demonstrated that the parks system has operated on very limited resources for all of its 75 years. Previous efforts to reduce the size of the system and provide additional funding have helped, but the long-standing challenges of fiscal and resource needs have not been openly discussed and adequately addressed.

"Since its beginning in 1939 [...], the Montana State Park System has had the chronic problem of insufficient funding and management resources to properly carry out its responsibilities."

- State Park Futures Committee I, 1990

Since the mid-1970s, while the park system has increased in size and visitation, real spending power has remained flat due to inflation. In 1978, the Division managed 26 parks and monuments in addition to 59 other recreation areas with an operating budget of \$1.9 million. By 1990 the system had grown to 60 parks and a budget

10. Oschell, C. PhD and N. Nickerson PhD. 2012.

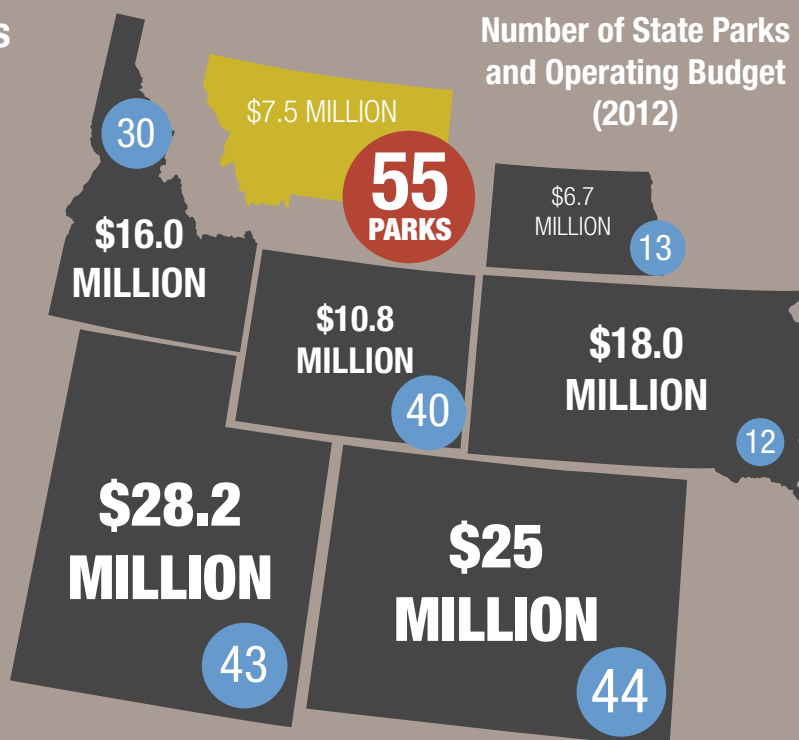
11. Environmental Quality Council. 2012.

12. Montana State Parks. 2014.

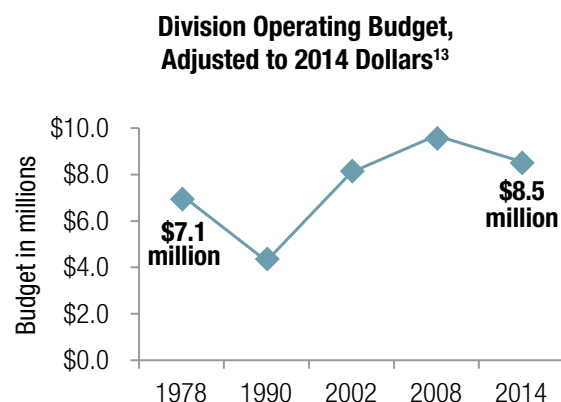
Comparison of State Park Systems in the Rocky Mountain West

In 2012, the Environmental Quality Council produced a report to the Legislature to analyze the state park system for the fourth time in 25 years. **HJR 32 Report on State Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Heritage Resource Programs** analyzed Montana State Parks in comparison to other systems in the Rocky Mountain West.

The report found that at 55 state parks, Montana has the largest state parks system in the region. Conversely, with an operating budget of \$7.5 million in fiscal year 2012, it has one of the smallest budgets. The Division also has the lowest level of full-time staffing in the region. These findings, which have been echoed in previous reports, are key to understanding the fiscal and resource challenges related to the long-term capacity of the system.



of \$2.3 million. After the 1990 Futures I Report, the Division shrank the system by transferring sites to other agencies and reducing the size to 47 parks. By 2014, the system has increased again to 55 parks with an operating budget of approximately \$8.5 million a year. However, when adjusted for inflation, the real spending power of the Division budget has only increased slightly more than \$1 million from 1978 while operating costs and maintenance needs have continued to increase over the same time.



Currently, the fiscal and staff resources are at capacity given the size of the system and the ongoing operations and capital investment

needed maintain it. When compared to other state park systems in the Rocky Mountain West, Montana State Parks has more state parks than any other state park system and one of the smallest operating budgets for the 2012 fiscal year. The Division also has the lowest level of full-time staffing in the region.¹⁴

By defining the Montana State Parks brand promise and identifying our values that represent the park system to Montanans, the Division must look to prioritize its resources to address the most significant sites within the system while maintaining affordability for all. Efforts to strategically focus on key park resources will strengthen the system and improve the visitor experience. Good experiences at state parks will bring economic benefit to local communities, and will ultimately help grow Montana's recreation industry.

The responsibility for the success of the state park system cannot be limited to the Division itself, but must include collaboration with other FWP divisions and partnerships with the larger recreation community, including city, county, and federal recreation providers as well as partners in tourism, education, public health, and heritage resources.

13. Calculated using CPI Inflation Calculator, United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

14. Environmental Quality Council. 2012.



STATE RECREATION OUTLOOK

The Montana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) for 2014-2018 is the state's comprehensive resource for outdoor recreation management and planning. The plan, titled *Creating a Vibrant Future for Montana's Outdoor Recreation Heritage*, represents a collaborative effort between Montana's diverse recreation providers, the tourism community, and residents; and provides a strategy to guide management of Montana's outdoor recreation resources in a holistic and effective manner.

More than 11 million visitors each year come to Montana to enjoy the endless outdoor opportunities this great state has to offer. The Outdoor Industry Association estimates that outdoor recreation is a \$5.8 billion industry in Montana that supports 64,000 jobs. Montanans recognize that outdoor recreation and open spaces attract and sustain families and businesses, create healthy communities and foster a high quality of life.

However, recreation managers are struggling to reflect this high priority that Montanans and visitors place upon our natural, cultural and recreational resources. Many agencies have seen a decrease in recreation budgets in recent years, and there is an overall lack of coordination and leadership at the state and national level. More discussion is needed to understand who pays for parks and recreation services on public lands, and how a willingness to pay can foster engaged constituents and positive user attitudes for services. A new vision is necessary to ensure that our recreation resources are protected and sustained for current and future generations regardless of which agency manages them.

Goals for Outdoor Recreation in Montana 2014-2018

A. Improve the quality of life of all Montanans

B. Sustain the economic vitality of communities

C. Promote stewardship and sustainability

D. Enhance agency coordination and service provision

The 2014-2018 SCORP promotes a new model of seamless management and service provision that encourages collaboration across all levels. Agencies and partners in the recreation and tourism industry need to work alongside the citizens of Montana to integrate recreation management in a manner that provides high quality services and well-maintained resources, just as lodging and hospitality owners need to have well-maintained attractions to support their businesses. In order to foster the growth of outdoor recreation and the associated tourism industry, we need to provide depth to the parks and recreation experience.

The Montana SCORP provides the foundation for the Montana State Parks Strategic Plan. By lifting up recreation at the state level, we can enhance recreation on city and county lands, draw attention to challenges on federal lands, and provide the necessary leadership to elevate recreation in the public and political sphere. Alignment between this strategic plan and the SCORP is critical to ensure that a shared vision for recreation in Montana is achieved for the benefit of families, communities, and economies.

*“The most compelling and valuable to me personally is the **availability of the parks for all Montanans**, with diverse recreational opportunities. [Additionally,] the great educational services the parks provide to schools at no cost.”*

- Whitehall listening session

*“[Montana State Parks provide] **a sense of history**, understanding of historical events and lifeways, and interaction with the built environment and cultural landscapes.”*

- Missoula listening session

*“[Montana State Parks] **engage young people and adults** in outdoor activities and the natural world.”*

- Kalispell listening session



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

In February 2014, the Montana State Parks & Recreation Board and Division leadership participated in a facilitated retreat. The goal of the retreat was to outline priorities for addressing current challenges in funding and operations, and discuss opportunities in policy, regulation and legislation to improve the state parks for the benefit of Montanans and our visitors.

The Board proposed a strategic framework for sustainable funding, visitor services, and overall strengthening of the system—a new framework that reflects the most prudent use of public funds, innovative approaches to public/private partnerships, and the highest sense of accountability to all the citizens of Montana.

DEVELOP DIVERSIFIED & SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Develop a diversified and sustainable funding model for the state park system that:

- ✧ Addresses both operational expenses and capital projects to maintain and improve parks;
- ✧ Maximizes appropriate state funding sources, increases earned revenue, and builds a philanthropic revenue stream;
- ✧ Applies best practices to the management of public resources for the public benefit; and
- ✧ Better leverages existing Federal funding opportunities that require a state match.

18

Deepen existing and build new strategic partnerships with key organizations and partners who have a shared stake in the operations and the success of the state park system. Initial current or future key strategic partners identified by the Board include other divisions in the Department; tourism industry; historic preservation; Tribal governments; non-profits; and local city and county governments and entities. These partnerships will help develop key supporters for the system, and strengthen the community that values state parks.

GROW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

BUILD AN ENGAGED CONSTITUENCY

To better serve Montana citizens, and to more deeply engage them in the management and growth of the state park system, the Division will develop approaches for regular communication with individual constituents as well as a wide range of stakeholder groups. Initial constituents includes user groups, service organizations, organizational partners like the Montana Trails, Recreation & Parks Association, federal agencies, private business partners like concessionaires, elected officials and opinion leaders, and the general public.

GOALS, TARGETS AND ACTIONS



A

RESOURCES AND APPROACHES

GOAL: Manage significant, relevant, and accessible parks and programs in a manner that is consistent with available resources.

B

FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

GOAL: Develop diversified and sustainable funding for the Montana State Parks system and statewide recreation programs.

C

SERVICES AND EXPERIENCES

GOAL: Provide for enriching recreation experiences for all visitors consistent with the brand promise.

D

PARTNERSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENT

GOAL: Foster strategic partnerships and an engaged constituency with visitors and key stakeholders that have a shared interest in the success of the Montana State Park system.

E

AWARENESS AND OUTREACH

GOAL: Heighten awareness and recognition for the Montana State Parks brand through consistent engagement.

Five goals and accompanying targets and actions are detailed in this section.

This strategic plan is not intended to list all potential actions that could be undertaken by the Division over the next five years, but rather the actions that Parks Board, staff, and citizens have identified as important for supporting and strengthening the system.

The following targets and actions are intended to provide overarching direction for Montana State Parks through 2020. In addition to the actions outlined here, the Division will conduct an assessment of key statutes and regulations to identify necessary changes and updates for the success of the plan. This may include proposals to update to the statutes and rules to better define a state park and reflect the brand promise; revisions to the public use regulations to provide additional details and clarification on park management and operations; and development of new policies to support the strategy outlined in this plan.

To be successful in this endeavor, Montana State Parks must employ a holistic, systems thinking approach to align our programs and management strategies at all levels. By being consistent in our approach and working with strategic partners and engaged constituents, we can bring leadership and professionalism to the outdoor recreation field in Montana and nationally.

A strong Montana State Parks system will ultimately enhance recreation at all levels, encourage investment in parks and recreation that goes beyond the state parks' boundaries, and connect to community benefits like a strong economy, education, public health, and social wellbeing.



A

RESOURCES AND APPROACHES

A healthy state park system requires resources to ensure good stewardship of assets and amenities for today and tomorrow. Inadequate levels of funding and staffing resources over the last 75 years has impacted the ability of the Division to properly sustain basic management tasks, and keep up with resource protection and on-going maintenance projects—let alone increase and expand recreational opportunities for visitors. Ultimately, the focus of this strategic plan is to produce effective solutions with the resources that are available.

In order to be successful, the Parks Board and Division must prioritize and reallocate resources to preserve the most significant sites in the system. Upon adoption of this plan, the brand promise—outlined on page 8—will lay the foundation for the Division to develop criteria for classifying sites and to establish standards for management. This process will help the Division manage the most significant sites as state parks, and thus provide a higher level of staffing, operational, and funding levels. This will ensure adequate resource stewardship and a quality of experience that strengthens the brand and brings depth to the visitor experience. The Division will also explore opportunities to manage sites that do not meet the brand promise through strategic partnerships to avoid divestment and to keep lands in public ownership. The public's demand for parks and services is not commensurate with its willingness to pay, and this plan seeks to close that gap. To ensure transparency in decision-making, the Division will work closely with the Parks Board to engage Montanans at all levels throughout the process.

Although the Division is limited in its approach to address the long-standing staffing challenges, strategic partnerships are emphasized as a key factor to success.

21

GOAL: Manage significant, relevant, and accessible parks and programs in a manner that is consistent with available resources.

Target 1: Prioritize the Division's most significant sites, resources, and programs.

- Establish criteria and an evaluation process to classify parks of statewide significance, relevance, and accessibility by end of 2014.
- Upon plan adoption, categorize parks consistent with their classifications and adjust services, management approaches, and expectations by end of 2015.
- Establish standards to demonstrate staffing needs and operational levels for consistent management across the system based on peer analysis by end of 2015. Set priorities for allocating staffing and funding resources aligned with the most significant state parks.
- Partner with communities, foundations, and constituents to close gaps and improve services as opportunities arise to keep affected sites in public domain.
- Conduct an inventory of facility conditions by 2016. Implement a maintenance management system by 2017.

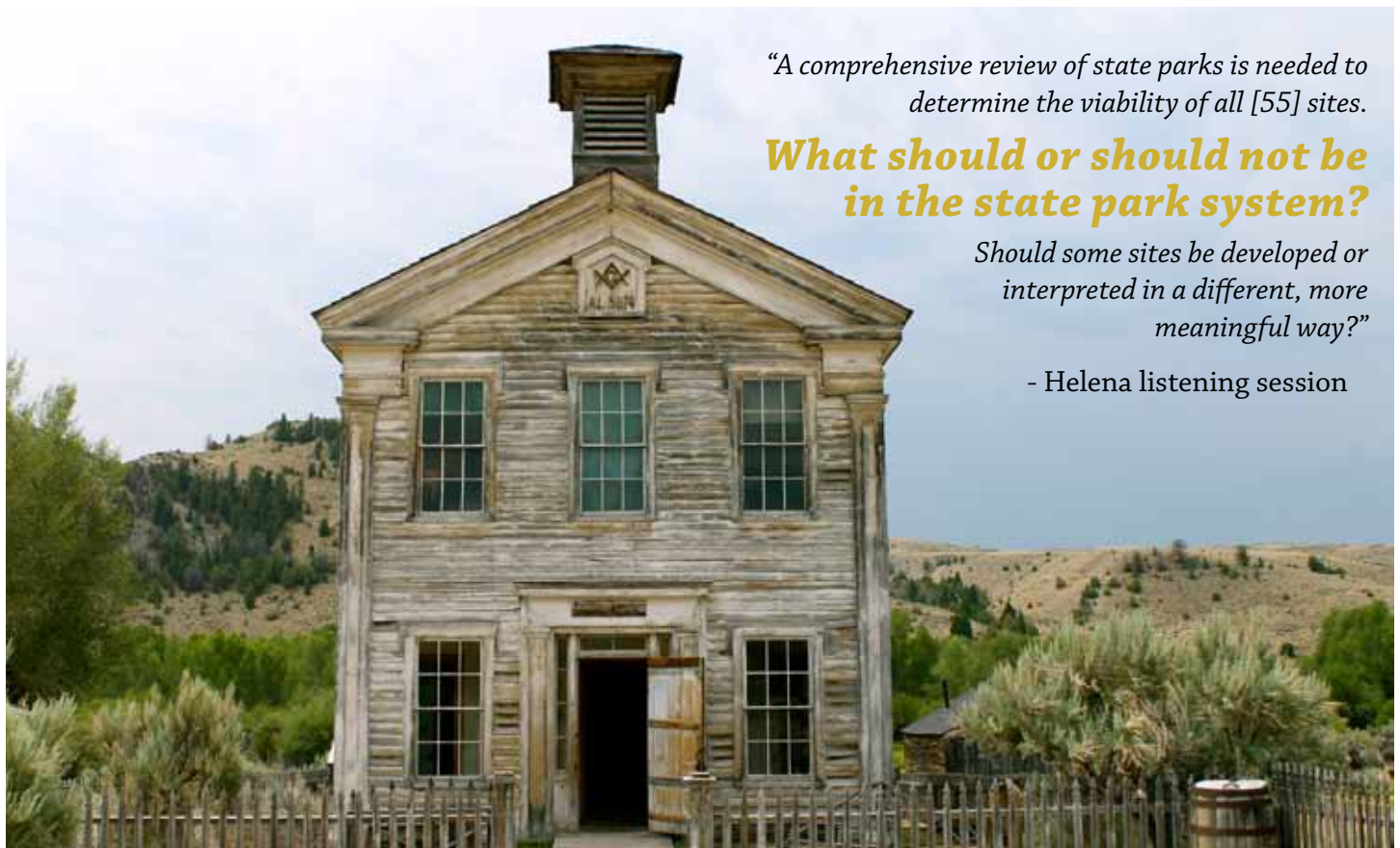
- Develop appropriate management plans and master site plans for priority parks.
- Develop a system-wide heritage resource strategy to address unique management challenges and opportunities of historic sites by 2017.

Target 2: Increase partnerships in alignment with the Division mission to enhance resource stewardship and opportunities while building the brand.

- Support partners to address resource needs and bring forth progressive, engaged and funded concepts for expanding strategic acquisition, services, and economic development.
- Expand opportunities to integrate friends groups, user groups, and interested citizens into stewardship and management activities. Implement a process for partnering with groups, including a Memorandum of Understanding where appropriate.
- Develop interagency and organizational partnerships to share staff, expertise, and resources to help offset operations and maintenance costs by 2018.
- Achieve interagency programming within a larger recreation context to deliver cohesive experiences with other related sites and properties.

Target 3: Foster professionalism and empowerment in staff and the industry.

- Develop career pathways for key positions to encourage internal advancement and strengthen external recruitment in a positive environment.
- Improve professional staff expertise in underrepresented programs including but not limited to natural resource protection, visitor user management, concessions management, GIS applications, and trail design and maintenance.
- Incentivize staff engagement with communities to support progressive partnerships.
- Engage communities to expand our stewardship and programming through ongoing emphasis.



“A comprehensive review of state parks is needed to determine the viability of all [55] sites.

What should or should not be in the state park system?

Should some sites be developed or interpreted in a different, more meaningful way?”

- Helena listening session

B FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

Adequate funding for Montana State Parks and recreation programs is one of the most fundamental and critical issues identified during the planning process. Twenty-five years of reports have documented that the park system has been consistently underfunded and underdeveloped throughout its 75-year history. Increasing fiscal health will improve the long-term sustainability of the system and provide the Division with the necessary level of support to adequately protect park resources and human safety, maintain and improve the integrity of park infrastructure, and enhance the visitor experience to meet the needs of our customers.

To ensure a healthy and sustainable recreation and tourism industry in Montana, funding challenges at the local and federal levels must also be addressed. Funding for recreation continues to be challenged nationally. In Montana, the stateside LWCF program has decreased 88% since peak levels in 1979, and the act will sunset in 2015 if not reauthorized by Congress. Additionally, competition for available resources like the federal Recreational Trails Program grant funding is increasing across the state. A new model must be brought forward to supplement public funding with revenues and philanthropic support, and to enhance the impact of state funds with a wider scope that supports city and county recreation.

GOAL: Develop diversified and sustainable funding for the Montana State Parks system and statewide recreation programs.

Target 1: Grow revenue streams to meet visitor needs and cover increasing cost of operations.

- Expand parks earned revenue streams (fees, retail, concession revenue) by 100% by 2019. Develop business plans for key parks to assist with implementation, and explore opportunities to partner with Montana universities for expertise.
- Identify opportunities to double the number of concessionaires in state parks.
- Develop strategies to increase the current participation rate for the light vehicle registration fee across the state.

Target 2: Establish a secure funding source for the Division and expand support for city, county, and state recreation.

- Quantify fiscal needs within the park system through standards and processes to improve management overall by the end of June 2015.
- Pursue dedicated funding sources to meet fiscal needs, including but not limited to: amending the vehicle registration to be mandatory and pursuing a statutory increase; redirecting portion of other state funding sources, such as an increase in the coal tax or earnings from the lottery; advocating that general fund monies are appropriated to parks and recreation; establishing a new funding source from excise taxes related to non-consumptive uses, etc.
- With dedicated sources in place, establish a state grant program to supplant federal funding for use in renovation and replacement of facilities and resources in parks, recreation and trails for city, county, state, school districts, Tribal lands and others as a means of supporting communities, our tourism economy and assuring all providers have a stable, supported program.

Target 3: Foster private investment and philanthropy to raise a minimum of \$4.0 million for the park system by 2020.

- Cultivate and leverage potential investments by philanthropic donors and corporate partners.
- Develop policies for acceptance of charitable gifts and appropriate donor recognition as well as the development of other private contributions.
- Identify exciting legacy projects across the system with potential charitable partners.
- Actively apply for grants to supplement stewardship goals and capital projects.

Target 4: Enhance the dialogue on recreation funding at the state and national level.

- Engage citizens to discuss how recreation is funded within Montana, including who is paying for recreation, where monies are spent, and ways to build a strong model of ongoing support between industry, agencies, and citizens.
- Work with the Parks Board, Fish & Wildlife Commission, Land Board, elected officials, and key stakeholders for the reauthorization of the LWCF Act in 2015 to full funding and at equitable levels between federal and stateside apportionments. Encourage broadening the criteria to reflect maintenance costs, and to allow communities to more easily repurpose previously funded recreation developments to reflect changes in demand.

C

SERVICES AND EXPERIENCES

24

Montana's state parks and recreation programs provide people with a place to play, experience nature, and learn about Montana's history. However, each park cannot be all things to all people. We must strategically assess the kinds of experiences, programs, and sites that are most significant in the system. Core to the Montana State Parks brand promise is providing a high-quality visitor experience that is consistent across the units and programs. Over the last 25 years, the Division has taken steps to unify the system under a cohesive mission and vision, and to communicate effectively through innovative marketing and awareness campaigns—but we must do much more. As visitation increases and more people enjoy our state parks, improvements can be made to enhance service provision and programming, enhance the tourism economy, and further refine our focus on the state's most significant parks.

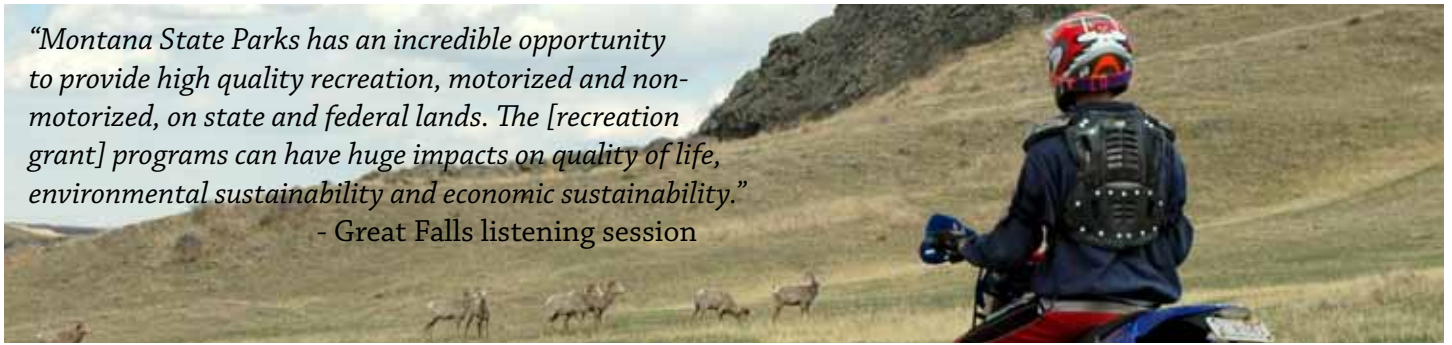
GOAL: Provide for enriching recreation experiences for all visitors consistent with the brand promise.

Target 1: Expand services and recreation opportunities.

- Reallocate staffing and funding to support the most significant parks as a priority and in alignment with standards supported by the brand.
- Integrate public safety and risk management into all aspects of park operations.
- Conduct a system-wide facility assessment by 2016 with special attention to ADA accessibility and make improvements as necessary. Adopt achievable universal design standards, and update the state parks website to include information on accessible facilities and amenities by 2016.
- Identify partners and concessionaire opportunities to utilize better and more park acreage in ways that expands value-added services and innovative offerings, such as recreation equipment rentals, guided tours, zip lines, treehouse camping and other innovative opportunities.

“Montana State Parks has an incredible opportunity to provide high quality recreation, motorized and non-motorized, on state and federal lands. The [recreation grant] programs can have huge impacts on quality of life, environmental sustainability and economic sustainability.”

- Great Falls listening session



Target 2: Enhance educational experiences to connect visitors to natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

- Continue to expand interpretive programming to teach about and connect residents and visitors to state parks and heritage resources, including field schools, use of digital media, and opportunities for passive engagement while building experiential depth.
- Develop a better understanding of how to make the state parks and heritage sites more relevant to Montana youth of all backgrounds. Identify opportunities to connect youth to the outdoors, including through stewardship, management activities, and engagement with the Parks Board.

Target 3: Build up state-administered recreation programs.

- Promote outdoor skills and land ethics through the development of strong education and programming that increases awareness of visitor impacts.
- Establish clearer and consistent communication processes for working with clubs and advisory committees.
- Increase the organizational knowledge and leadership for trail planning expertise, and assist communities as appropriate and funded.
- Revise and update the Montana State Trails Plan by 2020 through a collaborative process.
- Improve the availability, usability, and awareness of trails data on public lands around the state.

25

D

PARTNERSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENT

The Montana State Parks & Recreation Board identified cultivating strategic partnerships and engaged constituents as major focus for the strategic plan. Effective partnerships provide a mechanism for maximizing limited resources and improving the net benefit to the public. For Montana State Parks to be successful, we must go beyond our agency boundaries and engage all stakeholders and supporters in active discussions to develop multi-faceted solutions. The recreation industry has historically lacked coordinated leadership at the local, state and national levels, and recreation providers across the state face similar challenges. The Parks Board and Montana State Parks have a unique opportunity to be Montana’s leading voice for recreation management and help build collaboration among recreation providers, industry, and citizens to improve services that support families, communities, and the economy.

Through collaborative efforts we must encourage citizen involvement and raise the awareness with state and community policy makers. By working together, we can create a deeper sense of interdependency and build a strong advocacy base that promotes a unified voice and direction for parks, recreation, and public land in Montana without regard to jurisdiction or administrative boundaries.

GOAL: Foster strategic partnerships and an engaged constituency with visitors and key stakeholders that have a shared interest in the success of the Montana State Park system.

Target 1: Grow and strengthen formal partnerships.

- Work closer with the Department of Commerce and the Office of Tourism to integrate initiatives related to the recreation and tourism industry.
- Evaluate current partnerships and expand as appropriate, e.g. city and county associations, chambers of commerce, federal agencies, Tribal governments, health departments, educational institutions, heritage resources, service organizations, and non-profits.
- Cultivate a statewide non-profit Friends group with linkage to park- and program-specific groups. Enhance the dialogue, opportunity, and process for partnering with groups, including a Memorandum of Understanding with each group.

Target 2: Develop deeper connections with local communities through enriching and educational experiences.

- Engage communities and local organizations/groups to enhance state parks, including through concessionaires, citizen stewardship projects, citizen-led programming, and special community events.
- Improve communication and information exchange with city and county leadership and park directors on management objectives, projects, and business development opportunities.
- Identify and pursue joint management partnerships of sites with cities and counties.

Target 3: Build financial strength in a strategic manner by partnering with philanthropic and corporate sponsors.

- Work with foundations and corporate sponsors to raise funds for important, exciting projects and initiatives that support a legacy and enrich Montana's outdoor heritage.
- Identify incentives to promote and highlight existing partnerships on the website and through other means to garner new partners and support.

Target 4: Provide collective leadership with the Parks Board on statewide policy and management that advances parks and recreation across Montana.

- Support the development of an annual congress with recreation providers and partners like the Montana Trails, Recreation & Parks Association to discuss initiatives and share guidance. Provide a progress report of SCORP accomplishments to the Parks Board on an annual basis.
- Actively participate in regional and state planning efforts by other agencies and providers, and engage with recreation planning on federal lands and at the national level. Support local citizens engaged in recreation discussions.
- Work with agency and organizational partners to promote parks and recreation planning principles for cities and counties that have limited resources and ability for planning.



E

AWARENESS AND OUTREACH

Understanding and awareness of the unique attributes of the Montana State Park system has historically not been effectively communicated. In recent years, public appreciation has increased through innovative marketing campaigns, use of social media, and enhanced communication under a park-specific brand. Staff, with the support of the Montana State Parks AmeriCorps Program, has also worked hard to increase awareness through education, interpretation, and special community events. Today, 99.6% of Montanans say it is important for Montana to have state parks. In the community listening sessions as part of the strategic planning process, 95% of participants have a positive or somewhat positive view of Montana State Parks. The appreciation of Montana State Parks is growing, which is reflected in the increasing visitation and demand for more services and amenities. This is vital for cultivating legislative and fiscal support.

Continued successful outreach at all levels will help improve and promote our parks and statewide recreation programs. It is the responsibility of all staff and programs to build this awareness by connecting people to parks through education, community outreach events, and consistent engagement. This could include working with local chambers of commerce, community leaders, elected officials, organizations, and local governments to expand the awareness of park benefits and develop a deeper understanding of the challenges of the system. By doing this, we can tell our story more effectively to a broader audience and increase the appreciation of Montana's state parks, heritage sites and recreation programs. At the state level, branding efforts and policy guidance will ensure consistency throughout the system and further our promise to provide experiences that are significant, relevant, and accessible.

27

GOAL: Heighten awareness and recognition for the Montana State Parks brand through consistent engagement.

Target 1: Reposition Montana State Parks to attract new visitors, retain and deepen connections with current users, and expand benefits to all Montanans.

- Develop a marketing plan that includes a strong campaign focused on the brand promise by 2016.
- Enhance customer relationships through fresh and innovative methods, including social media, website, electronic newsletters, photography, and video. Highlight traditional outreach with attractive brochures, newspaper, radio, and television. Provide strategies for staff to social network at the local level with relevant content.
- Develop an online customer engagement system for visitors to easily and efficiently provide comments about park services and amenities by 2016.
- Expand outreach to attract and engage populations not traditionally served through varied, innovative, and culturally relevant communication, including young adults, Native Americans, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- Communicate the statewide benefits of recreation grant programs more effectively, and promote accomplishments with an annual report.

Target 2: Increase public and political awareness and appreciation of state parks, heritage sites and recreation programs.

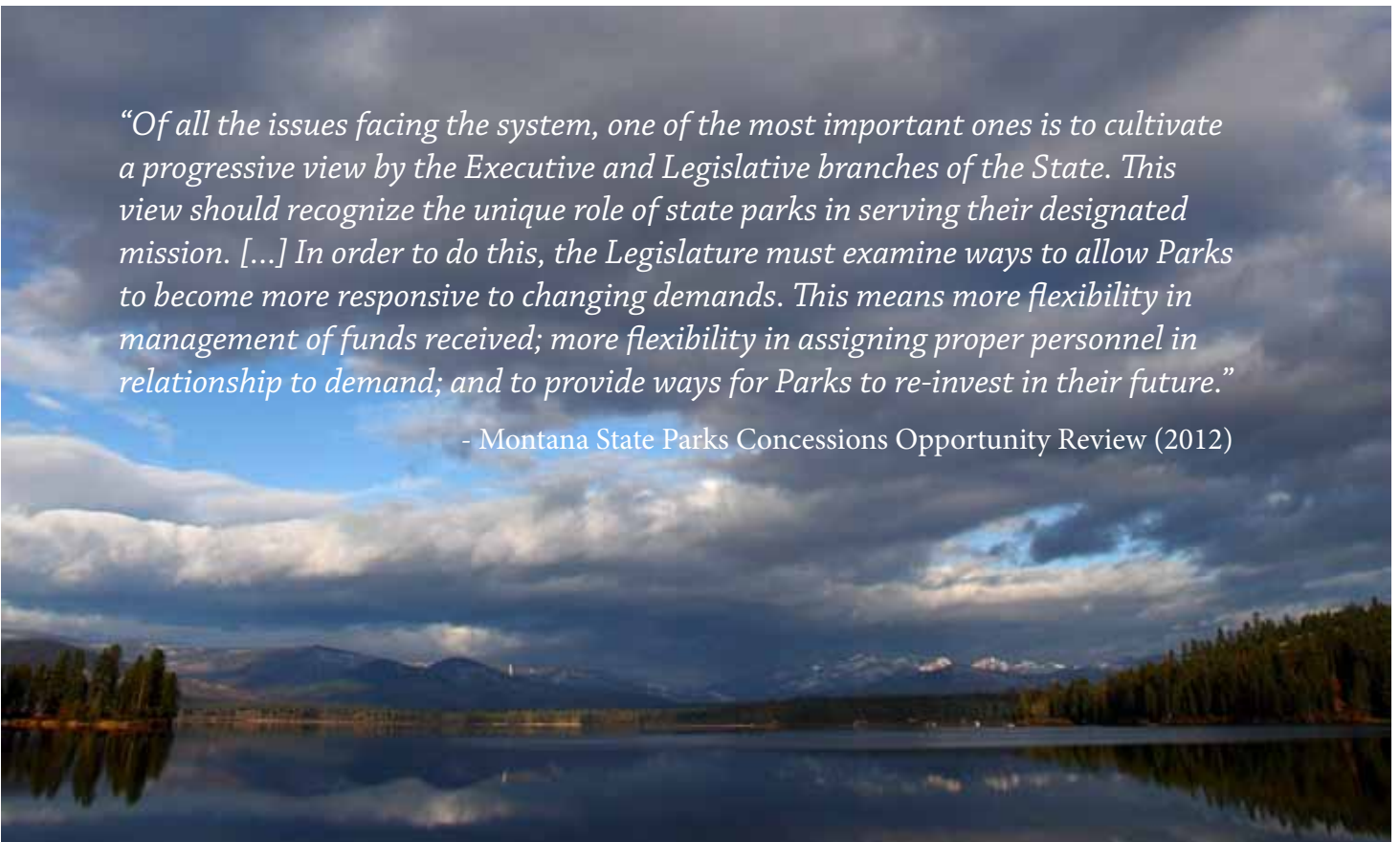
- Work with local chambers of commerce, community leaders, organizations, and local and Tribal governments to expand the awareness of park benefits and a deeper understanding of the challenges of the system.
- Foster relationships with local Legislators through regular communication and outreach, including field visits.
- Take the lead for the state on nationwide initiatives such as National Public Lands Day, First Day Hikes, and National Get Outdoors Day.
- Incentivize staff participation in community activities, and promote visitor centers at state parks as a community resource for educational and civic programs.
- Engage local schools and universities to enhance educational experiences by using state parks as outdoor classrooms.

Target 3: Expand partnerships for marketing and outreach efforts.

- Continue to leverage the marketing budget through cross promotion with tourism partners, corporate sponsors, non-profit foundations, and private donors.
- Partner with key agencies, tourism alliances, and chambers of commerce to coordinate signage and way-finding standards in communities.
- Identify opportunities to expand campaigns in gateway communities both at home and outside Montana, including at welcome centers, rest stops, and border crossings.

“Of all the issues facing the system, one of the most important ones is to cultivate a progressive view by the Executive and Legislative branches of the State. This view should recognize the unique role of state parks in serving their designated mission. [...] In order to do this, the Legislature must examine ways to allow Parks to become more responsive to changing demands. This means more flexibility in management of funds received; more flexibility in assigning proper personnel in relationship to demand; and to provide ways for Parks to re-invest in their future.”

- Montana State Parks Concessions Opportunity Review (2012)





CONCLUSION

The Montana State Parks strategic plan is an aggressive approach to address the long-standing challenges of the parks system related to fiscal sustainability, resource needs, and awareness and advocacy. With over 25 years of analysis and recommendations leading into this planning effort, this five year strategy is key to changing the course of the park system and charting a new tomorrow.

While this plan is ambitious, it is also grounded in actions that are possible to achieve with the support and continued participation of partners and constituents. Concerted and coordinated efforts by many will ensure the long-term success of Montana State Parks, its recreation programs, and the overall recreation industry in Montana.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

One of the first steps in the implementation process will be to prioritize the actions underlying each goal and target. Each of the Division's programs must contribute to the implementation of the plan and recommendations for it to be successful. The Division will also work to identify public, private, and non-profit partners that can assist further with implementation. Identification of more specific timelines will be prepared as part of performance plans as necessary to achieve the desired outcomes.

In addition, monitoring the progress of the direction outlined here will be an important part of the strategy. Monitoring helps to assure that our efforts and the public's feedback during the process conform to the plan, and that we are accomplishing what we intended to accomplish. The Division will actively analyze progress as a central component to implementation, and provide an updated report to the Montana State Parks & Recreation Board on an annual basis.

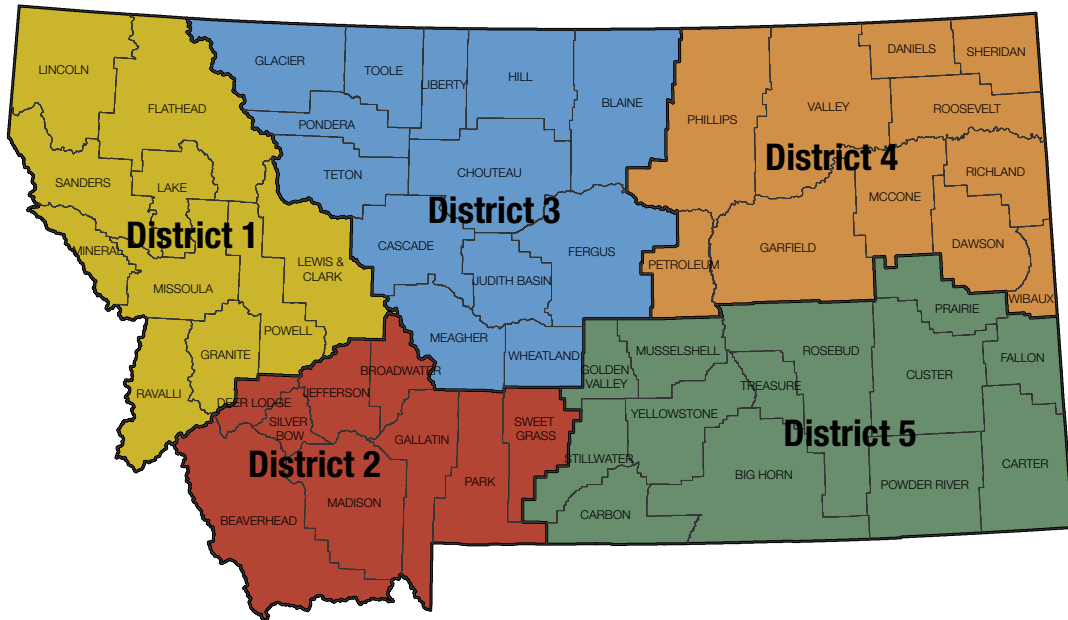
The Division is proud to say that this strategic plan is the culmination of more than nine months of work with participation by staff and the Parks Board, members of the Legislature, agency partners and organizations, and over a hundred dedicated individuals who volunteered their time and input to make this first step in the future of Montana State Parks a success.

Together, with our partners and the citizens of Montana, we can effectively and strategically enhance the status of Montana's state parks, and work towards a common goal that raises the awareness of our parks, recreation, trails, and heritage resources throughout the state. By doing so, we can further the professionalism of the recreation industry, support local communities and the growing tourism economy, and ensure this important legacy continues for the next 75 years and more. ✧

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STATE PARKS & RECREATION BOARD



It is the purpose of the Department, the Parks Division, and the State Parks and Recreation Board to conserve the scenic, historic, archaeologic, scientific, and recreational resources of Montana, provide for their use and enjoyment, and contribute to the cultural, recreational, and economic life of Montanans and their health (MCA 23-1-101, 23-1-111). The Board's duties include:

31

Policy, Direction & Rulemaking:

- Management, protection, conservation, and preservation of these properties, lands, and waters and their appropriate role relative to tourism and the economic health of Montana
- Coordinate, integrate, promote, and further opportunities for education and recreation, including but not limited to camping, hiking, snowmobiling, off-highway vehicle use, horseback riding, mountain biking, boating, and swimming
- Establish rules for use of these properties and lands in the interest of public health, public safety, public welfare, and protection of property and public resources in regulating recreation

Coordination & Engagement:

- Work with local, state, and federal agencies to evaluate, integrate, coordinate, and promote recreational opportunities statewide
- Encourage citizen involvement in management planning for state parks and other properties, lands, and waters
- Work with the Fish & Wildlife Commission to maintain hunting and angling opportunities on these lands and waters

Review & Approval Authority:

- All acquisitions and transfers of properties, lands, and waters by the Parks Division
- Parks Division budget prior to transmittal to the office of budget and program planning
- Construction projects with estimated cost of more than \$5000



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

Montana State Parks is a Division of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks